

Relaunch of Allergen Bureau website

Over the past 18 months, the Allergen Bureau has evolved and developed to the point of out-growing the basic format of the initial pilot-stage website.

After some intense redevelopment work during the past few months, the Allergen Bureau is pleased to announce the relaunch of our website www.allergenbureau.net

The website will be our key resource for communicating with Members and other interested parties, and for providing information related to allergen risk management for industry.

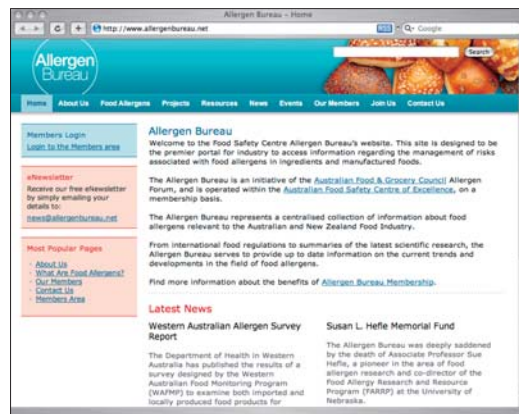
New features of the website include many of the suggestions put forward in the Allergen Bureau's first year review project. Amongst these is a more user-friendly lay-out, no initial log-in requirement, a search function and smaller file sizes to allow faster download. The

new site will be updated on a fortnightly basis.

A Members-only section has been retained, which will hold information pertaining to the management and strategic activities of the Allergen Bureau.

Key technical information and important news updates will be freely available to all users.

We encourage you to check out this fantastic new resource.



Please forward any feedback or suggestions to: info@allergenbureau.net

Management Changes

The Australian Food Safety Centre of Excellence issued a call for tenders for the on-going Facilitation of the Allergen Bureau in May this year. A joint proposal from AgriQuality (who have managed the Allergen Bureau from its inception) and Rural Development Services (RDS) proved successful, with this secretariat taking effect on 1 July 2006.

Dr Tom Lewis (RDS) has been appointed the Allergen Bureau Manager, with Dr Lyn Davies (AgriQuality) moving to become the Chief Technical Officer. Naomi McGrath-Kerr from RDS is the Executive Officer. This team has over-seen the redevelopment of the website and the creation of the Allergen Bureau Operating Plan for 2006/07, in addition to the on-going provision of technical and administrative support to the food industry for all allergen-related projects and enquiries received via the existing free-phone and email helpdesk service.

One of the first roles of the new secretariat was to conduct an election for the Allergen Bureau Management Committee. This was achieved through a formal and transparent call for nominations and votes from all member companies, and resulted in the election of Fiona Fleming (George Weston Foods), Kirsten Grinter (Uncle Tobys) and David Henning (Campbell Arnotts). Professor Tom McMeekin also stands on the Committee as a representative of the Australian Food Safety Centre of Excellence, with Dr Tom Lewis acting an observer on behalf of the Allergen Bureau secretariat.

The Management Committee has developed its Terms of Reference, with a key function to direct the use of resources of the Allergen Bureau on behalf of all Members.

Dates for your diary

Workshops & Seminars

EML CONSULTING QLD SEMINARS ON ALLERGEN CONTROL

Brisbane 4 October 2006

Sydney 24 October 2006

Melbourne 27 October 2006

For more information email sarah.clatworthy@eml.com.au

THE 2007 ALLERGEN BUREAU WORKSHOP/SEMINAR

Following the highly successful Allergen Bureau seminar in Sydney earlier this year, the Allergen Bureau has set a date for a one-day event to be held in Sydney and In Melbourne in 2007.

Sydney 21 February 2007

Melbourne 28 February 2007

Once again, the workshops are open to all and registration fee discounts will be provided for delegates from Member companies who have signed up in the first half of the membership year. Further information will be highlighted on the website in due course, and circulated by email in subsequent issues of the Allergen Bureau eNews.

Allergen Bureau Membership

Our thanks go to the following 25 companies who have committed themselves to the food industry's allergen management initiatives and helped us to grow the Allergen Bureau this year:

AgriQuality, Cadbury Schweppes, Campbells Arnotts, Cerebos, Coles Myer, Danisco, EML Consulting QLD, George Weston Foods, Golden Circle, Goodman Fielder, Greens General Foods, Heinz, Kelloggs, Kerry Ingredients, Kraft, Masterfoods, Murray Goulburn, National Foods, Nestle, Nuts for Life, Parmalat, Peanut Company of Australia, Simplot, Uncle Tobys, and Unilever .

Membership rates are adjusted quarterly for the year ending 30 March 2007. Companies who join the Allergen Bureau before the end of October will be invoiced for \$2,500 (+GST) to cover the remaining period, and will be eligible for registration fee discounts for the forthcoming Allergen Bureau workshops. Contact the Allergen Bureau for more details of the membership benefits plus how to position your company amongst the leaders in allergen management.

AFGC Food Industry Guide to Allergen Management and Labelling – Update

Much hard work by the AFGC Allergen Forum has seen the completion of several projects, and has provided useful tools for industry to use in everyday food allergen management.

The outcomes of these projects, which can also be found on the Allergen Bureau website, are now being consolidated into a new edition of the widely-used AFGC Food Industry Guide to Allergen Management and Labelling, previously published in October 2002.

With the wealth of allergen management information now held by the Australasian food industry, the Guide will take on a new format that will provide more detail and allow for more frequent updates yet retain an easy-to-use layout similar to the previous edition.

A project team has been established to work on updating the Guide. For more information, contact the Allergen Bureau on info@allergenbureau.net.au

Emerging Allergens

Due to increasing concerns about the allergenicity of both molluscs and lupins, the European Food Safety Authority has added these two allergens, and their derivatives, to the list of substances requiring mandatory advisory labelling on foodstuffs sold in the European Union.

LUPINS

Lupin seeds have been part of normal food intake since ancient times and are consumed as snacks in several European countries. Lupin flour was introduced in 1996 in the UK and in 2001 in Australia. Lupin flour can be used in biscuits, pasta, sauces, as well as milk and soy substitutes. Lupin does not contain gluten so is sometimes used in gluten-free foods.

Most allergic reactions to lupin have been reported in peanut-allergic individuals, with a cross-reactivity rate to lupin flour in peanut-allergic individuals of around 30%. The prevalence of primary allergy to lupin in the general population is unknown and currently seems to be low.

Clinical symptoms reported after lupin inhalation or ingestion are similar to those reported for other inhalant or food allergens, ranging from mild local reactions to life-threatening systemic anaphylaxis. There is little information in the literature on the lowest dose of lupin that could cause a clinical allergic reaction.

MOLLUSCS

Some mollusc species are an important food source, and are widely used as gourmet products or ingredients. Their use as an added ingredient appears to be limited, but they can be found in some processed foods like soups and sauces and in products like surimi. Anaphylactic reactions and death have been reported in mollusc-allergic individuals. Molluscs, specifically cuttlefish, squid, abalone, oyster and snail have been implicated in food-dependent, exercise-induced anaphylaxis.

There is little data on the age of onset and the lifetime course of mollusc allergy, but research suggests that many of the reactions occur in school-age children and young adults. Mollusc allergenicity is not reliably reduced by food processing and the lowest dose of mollusc allergen that can cause a clinical reaction is not known.

A major allergen of most mollusc species is tropomyosin. This abundant muscle protein is an allergen also found in crustaceans, dust mites, and cockroach and other insects. Characterised tropomyosins in molluscs and different crustaceans show similarities but also significant differences in allergenic structures. In addition to tropomyosin, there is evidence that molluscs contain a number of other allergens. Cross-reactivity between mollusc species, as well as between molluscs and crustaceans and house dust mite has been reported.

LATEX

Latex appears to be another emerging allergen impacting upon the global food industry, although its presence in a food does not currently require labelling anywhere in the world.

Latex products are derived from the sap of commercially grown rubber trees, *Hevea brasiliensis*. Naturally-occurring proteins within the rubber can invoke contact dermatitis, urticaria and anaphylaxis, however even aerosolised latex particles can cause significant allergic symptoms in sensitised persons. Symptoms of latex allergy may progress rapidly and unpredictably to anaphylaxis, with individuals who previously experienced contact dermatitis experiencing anaphylaxis on subsequent exposure to latex.

A recent investigation into latex allergenicity was commissioned by the UK Food Standards Agency. Scientists at Leatherhead Food International measured latex allergen levels in 21 types of food packaging and found three cases where the rubber proteins had been transferred to food.

The UK Food Standards Agency said more research was needed before any firm conclusions could be drawn, and that advisory labelling would only be used when, following a thorough risk assessment, a real risk of allergic reactions could be demonstrated.

For more information about any of these emerging allergens, please contact the Allergen Bureau.

Western Australian Allergen Survey Report

The Department of Health in Western Australia has published the results of a survey designed by the Western Australian Food Monitoring Program (WAFMP) to examine both imported and locally produced food products for undeclared almond and hazelnut allergens.

The report claims that six out of the 76 packaged food products tested were found to contain levels of almond or hazelnut protein above the lowest limit of detection of the allergen test kits used in the survey. However, from the survey results alone, the authors were not able to determine whether or not the manufacturers concerned had failed to meet their mandatory allergen labelling obligations; as it was not known whether the tree nut proteins had been added to the foods as part of the product formulation (as defined in Food Standard 1.5.2), or whether they were present due to adventitious cross-contact with almond or hazelnut proteins in raw materials or production.

Regardless of the reported outcomes, the survey findings provide food manufacturers, importers and suppliers with a valuable reminder of the need for careful allergen management throughout the supply chain. Consumer safety is the foremost concern to the food industry; however it is also extremely important for the protection of company and industry reputations that all labelling and marketing policies can effectively be substantiated. This way, there is no opportunity for the detrimental and potentially misleading exposure of industry's food allergen management and labelling practices.

Susan L. Hefle Memorial Fund

The Susan L. Hefle Memorial Fund has been created in Sue's honour for the continuation of research into food allergens. The Allergen Bureau will contribute a donation of AUD \$500 to this fund on behalf of all member companies.

The Allergen Bureau was deeply saddened to receive news of the death of Associate Professor Sue Hefle, a pioneer in the area of food allergen research and co-director of the Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP) at the University of Nebraska.

We were privileged to have Sue as a keynote speaker at the 'Food Allergens: Issues and Opportunities for the Food Product Manufacturer' workshop held in Sydney in February 2004. This workshop resulted in the establishment of the Australian Food and Grocery Council's Allergen Forum, and the Australasian food industry is indebted to Sue for her contribution to the formation of this forum.

For more information about Sue's life and her many achievements go to www.go4milkshakes.com.

Request for resources

As the Allergen Bureau continues to develop our new website, we will be working to increase the number and type of resources available to the industry. To ensure the Allergen Bureau remains a valuable asset to industry, we therefore ask you to be our eyes and ears, to provide papers, events, reviews, website links and other useful information for us to post on the website.

The website will be updated fortnightly, and all contributions and feedback will be gratefully received.